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**ABSTRACT**

Designed for middle or high school students in Marlboro Township, Marlboro, New Jersey, the teen authors program involves students in the writing, editing, illustration and "publication" of children's books. The instructional unit takes 2 to 3 weeks to complete and culminates with an "author's day" where the student authors present their children's books to elementary school students. The actual creative writing activity process addresses several educational objectives, including proper punctuation, using transitional words, correct subject-verb agreement, self and peer editing, and using a variety of sentence structures. (Evaluation results and a list of instructional materials for the unit are included.) (RS)

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Move Over, Dr. Seuss,

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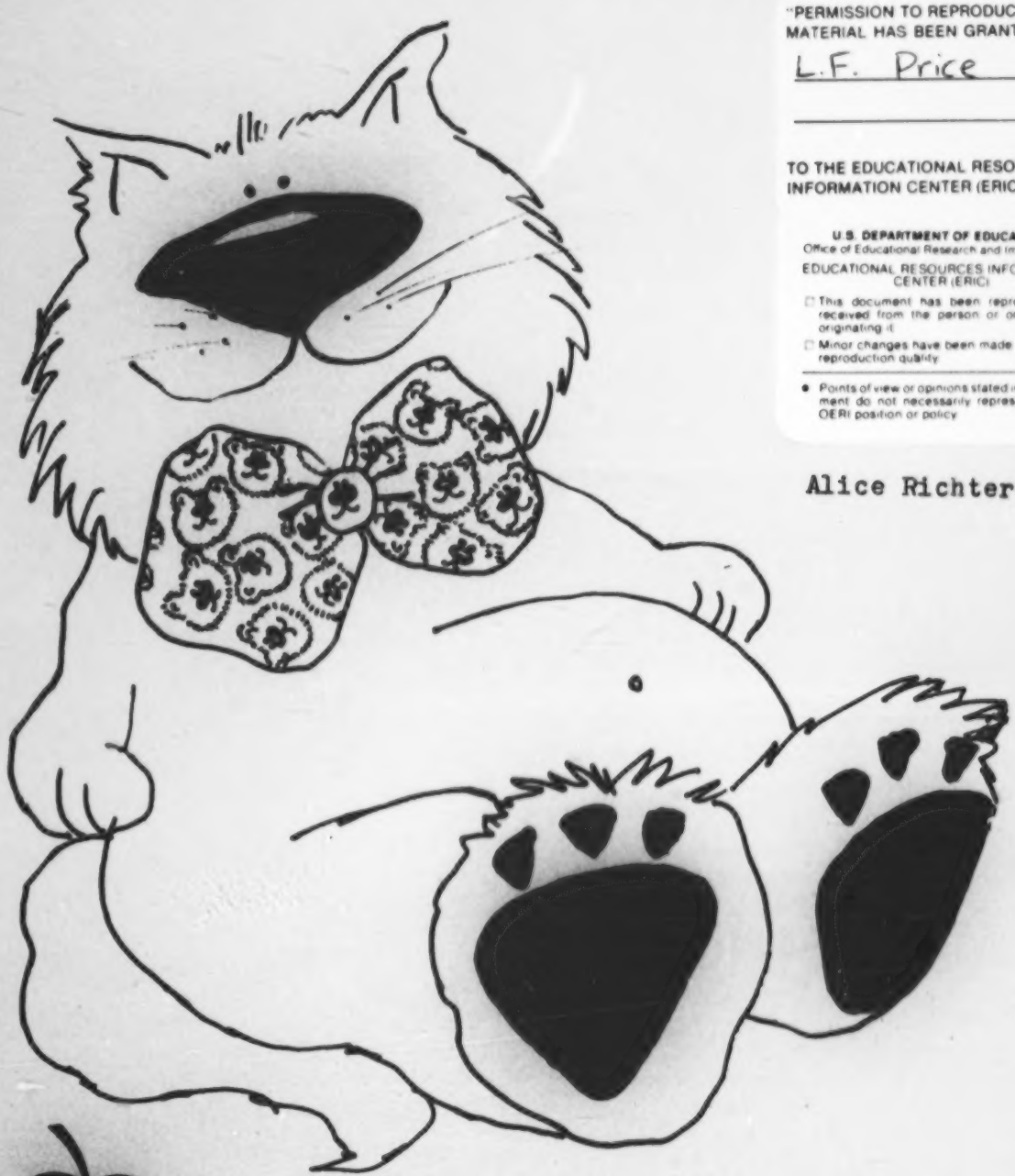
Alice Richter



New Jersey Governor's Teacher Grant Program - 1986
New Jersey State Department of Education

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STUDENT-TEACHER MATERIALS

FOR THE

**"MOVE OVER, DR. SEUSS, HERE COME NEW JERSEY'S TEEN AUTHORS"**

ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE

MARLBORO TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO ACQUIRE MATERIALS, CONTACT:

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# MOVE OVER,

# DR. SEUSS,

# HERE COME NEW JERSEY'S TEEN AUTHORS

**Developed by:** Alice Richter

Marlboro Township

Marlboro, New Jersey

1986 Governor's Teacher Grant Program

New Jersey Department of Education

Saul Cooperman, Commissioner

Thomas H. Kean, Governor

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STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CN 500
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0500

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

## Commissioner's Statement

Colleagues are frequently cited by teachers as a rich source of new ideas and effective methods that become incorporated into their own instructional practices. Recognizing the potential benefits of such sharing, Governor Thomas H. Kean established the Governor's Teacher Grant Program in 1985. Governor's Teacher Grants provide selected teachers with funds to prepare materials that will enable their instructional practices to be shared with others.

Now, with the conclusion of the first group of grants which were awarded in 1986, these teacher developed materials have been completed. In making these programs available to educators throughout the state, we give recognition to the important contribution that teachers make to school improvement. We are indeed grateful to those dedicated teachers selected as 1986 Governor's Teacher Grant recipients.

Saul Cooperman
Commissioner

SC/JB/RS/dm:2/3211G

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

**Move Over, Dr. Seuss, Here Come New Jersey's Teen Authors is an exciting and educationally rewarding creative writing experience for middle or high school students from low average to enrichment levels.**

Following a detailed series of specifically designed lesson plans, students create, write, and illustrate original children's books. The books are then personally delivered by their authors to elementary school students within the district on a specially designated **"Author's Day."** Within the framework of the unit, which takes two or three weeks to complete, students are introduced to the magical world of children's literature and to the professional methods and techniques used with the genre.

Among other techniques, students learn how to select vocabulary that is appropriate for young readers, how to create characters that a third grader will relate to, how to use exaggeration to promote humor or suspense, and how to create a varied and interesting lay-out.

The actual creative writing activity process addresses a diversity of multi-faceted instructional objectives. These run the gamut from organizing events in sequential order to using punctuation properly, from incorporating transitional words into the writing pattern to using correct subject-verb agreement, and from self and peer editing to using an interesting variety of sentence structure.

Since writing children's books knows no season, this project can be introduced at any time during the school year. However, the teacher may choose to use this creative writing activity as the culminating project after a given number of writing skills have been taught, reviewed, and mastered.

## MATERIALS AVAILABLE

- pre-unit teacher instructions and activities
- detailed sequential lesson plans
- teacher and student ditto materials
- illustrated lay-out techniques

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Everyone wants to be a published author, and teen-agers are no exception. "Move Over, Dr. Seuss, Here Come New Jersey's Teen Authors" is an exciting creative writing activity which transports the student into the world of publishing, complete with its creative writing challenges and decisions, its demanding editing skills, its eye-catching lay-out techniques, and its crowning enticement....publication!

Each student creates a unique children's book which is designed and written for a very specific audience, a book which reflects each student's individual ability to create, to communicate, and most importantly, to succeed.

## INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The instructional objectives inherent in creating and writing a children's book are extemely diverse and multi-faceted. They work best with seventh through twelfth grade students.

First, before the actual writing process even begins, students toss about possible storylines for their books. I have found these discussions to be particularly lively and effective because one idea sparks another, and the students are extremely supportive of one another's ideas. For example, one student might say, "I was lost at the beach when I was five, and boy, was I scared!" or "I always hated going to the dentist. My mother literally had to drag me into the office." This might evoke, "Into the office?" My mother couldn't

get me out of the car!" or "How long did it take before your mother found you, and how did you feel when you saw her?!" This opens up the area of frightening experiences. In effect, students are learning how to brain-storm, how to expand upon ideas and suggestions, and finally, how to then shift the focus of those ideas to writing.

The next instructional objective involves an awareness of and a proficiency in seventh through twelfth grade language arts skills. Each author knows that his/her book cannot be published until it is both grammatically and mechanically correct. Therefore, the awareness of writing skills begins with the first rough draft and continues until the final manuscript is written.

Before the first rough draft is even written, the class brain-storms and comes up with a list for Standard English, a list which each writer must be cognizant of and adhere to while writing. The list invariably includes language arts skills, such as:

- capitalization
- punctuation
- verb tenses
- spelling
- possessive forms
- subject-verb agreement
- transitional words
- apostrophes
- quotation marks
- organization of ideas
- sentence structure

The teacher then writes elicited list on the board, and each writer copies it into his/her notebook.

This initial activity conveniently sets the stage for all future writing and editing done within the unit. Not only does the writer have the

list of skills in front of him, but this same list is then used as a guide when self- and peer-editing are done. In fact, these skills are transferred onto student materials labeled "Self-Editing Check List" and "Peer-Editing Check List."

Furthermore, editing through peer teaming provides an opportunity for students to interact socially and educationally in a positive working environment that is conducive to both suggestion and criticism.

Finally, since this project is designed to work successfully with each and every student, regardless of past scholastic failures and/or achievements, each student is given the opportunity to succeed, each student is able to set a goal and accomplish that goal within a short period of time, and each student experiences an immediate sense of fulfillment and recognition. Students involved enjoy feelings of self-worth, of importance, and of feeling special on "Authors' Day," a day that has been created just for them.

The instructional activities for accomplishing the above objectives fall naturally within the framework and daily activities of the writing project. This particular project works well with students on all educational levels, even those students with poor writing skills, because all students must become familiar with the editing process and go through the various steps in that editing process with each and every draft of their manuscripts. Their own self- and peer-editing activities, combined with periodic editing checks by the teacher, produce a completed manuscript which is both grammatically and mechanically correct.

During the two-week writing and editing period, the teacher can easily assess each student's progress utilizing the following opportunities as check points:

- initial discussion and reading of manuscript outline
- reading and editing of rough drafts
- reading and editing of final manuscript
- individual editorial conferences with each author

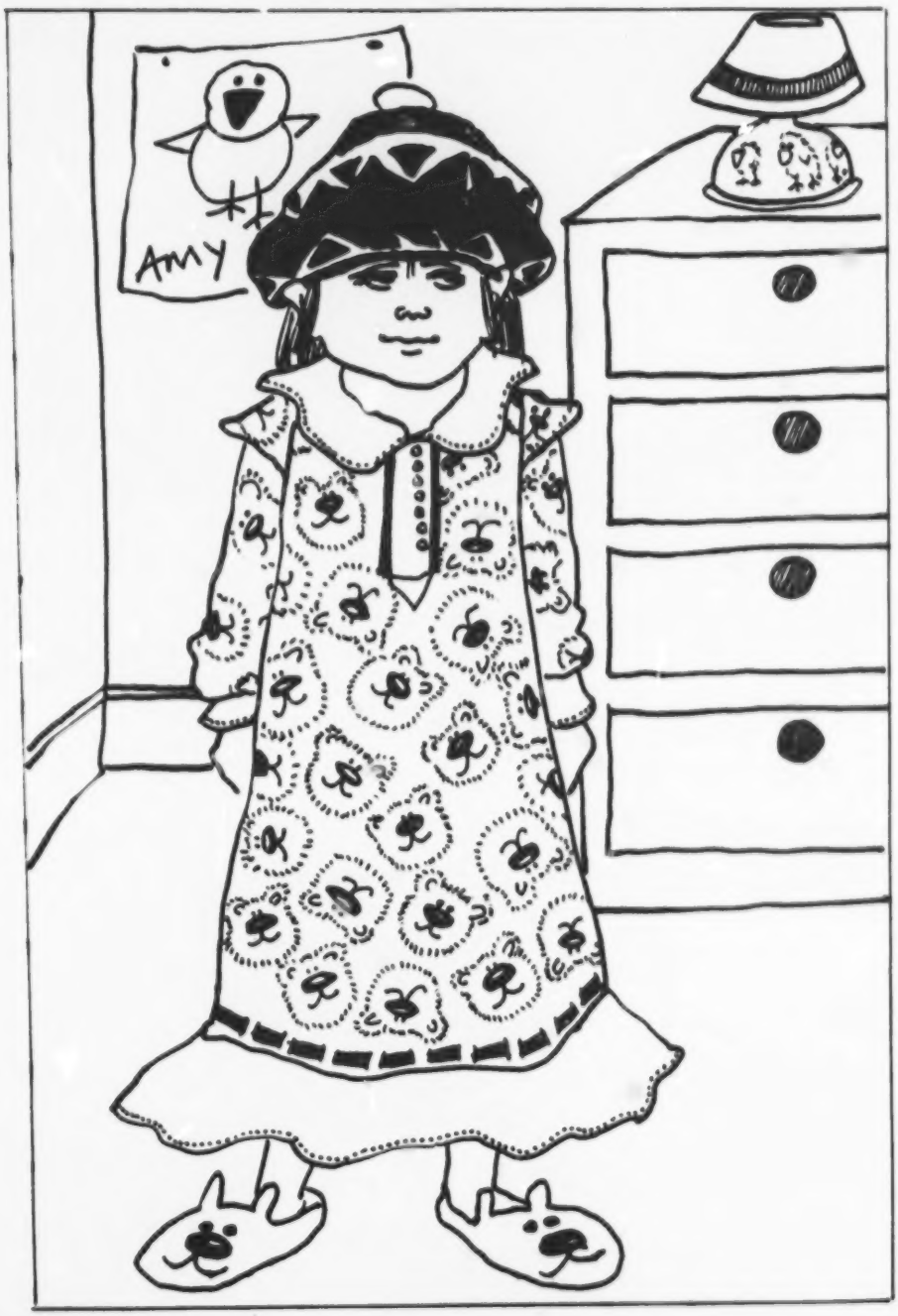
All of these check points allow the teacher a constant and intimate glimpse into the day-to-day progress each student is making in such areas as:

- story line development
- organization of ideas
- characterization
- awareness of standard English
- correct use of Standard English

Because individual student-teacher contact and assessment are done on such a frequent basis within such a short period of time, student thinking and writing weaknesses become readily apparent and are therefore recognized and rectified almost immediately. It is always gratifying to see progress being made on a daily basis! In addition, since the entire project takes no more than two to three weeks, the students reach their goals within a very short period of time.

The culminating step of the project is, of course, "Authors' Day." On this special day the authors take their completed books to the elementary school and deliver them personally to the second and third graders. Each student meets his/her new friend, becomes acquainted,

and reads the book he/she has written. At this point the student writers see that their writing has actually reached an audience, can be appreciated by others, and can, in fact, communicate their unique ability to create.



## RATIONALE

Reading several children's books to my students is one of the first activities in the creative writing project, "Move Over Dr. Seuss, Here Come New Jersey's Teen Authors." This sets the stage for a lively discussion about suitable story lines for young children's books and naturally branches out into a discussion where possible story lines for the students' own books are tossed around. Schwartz, in Talking Your Way Into Writing, states that the teacher can help to preserve the excitement of discussions by first drawing out ideas and then shifting the focus to writing. Furthermore, he states, "The magic of a group talk during prewriting then allows students a means of finding a topic worth writing about." Supporting these instructional theories, the students' discussions are extremely effective because the students are supportive of one another's ideas, and many students are able to crystallize their story lines as a result of sharing ideas. Consequently, they are anxious to begin the initial writing process involved in creating their original children's books.

At this point, the students are given easy to follow step-by-step directions which ultimately lead to the completion, or publication, of their books. "Giving clear and precise directions can increase a learner's chances of being successful." (Cummings: Teaching Makes a Difference) Because the thinking and writing techniques involved are clearly outlined, every student from low average to enrichment can participate, learn, share, and most important, succeed.

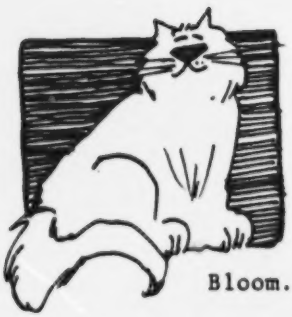
Another effective educational theory that is utilized in the writing

project can be found in Teaching Writing: A Process Approach. Graser states, "When a writer chooses a piece of writing to be published for an audience, they say, in effect, 'I'll make this clear so they can understand it.'" Since the student authors know that they are writing for a specific audience, careful attention is given to writing skills such as creating effective dialogue and putting plot development ideas into proper sequential order.

"Move Over, Dr. Seuss..." works because as Graser further states, "To revise, most students need an audience. They need someone to look and listen to what they have written and to respond to what it says." Editing through peer teaming provides just that opportunity in a working environment that is conducive to suggestions and corrections. Since student authors have their work edited by both peers and by the teacher within a short period of time, the writers are getting immediate response to what they have to say and to what they have written. Because the students are interacting acting socially as well as educationally, the revision process takes place in a positive environment for the writers.

Finally, the end result of this project is what teaching is all about.... success! "Successful experiences in school are likely to result in a positive academic self concept." (Bloom: Human Characteristic and School Learning) After delivering and reading their children's books to the elementary school students, the authors receive immediate feedback from the students and a feeling of success is generated to all those involved. Their writing skills have come alive in a real book! Someone has read what they have to say! Their work

has been appreciated by a real audience!



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Schwartz. Talking Your Way Into Writing.

## EVALUATION RESULTS

### ATTITUDE

The most important contribution of this project was the student's development of a positive attitude toward writing. At the beginning of the year, a goal of 80% was set for a positive attitude toward writing.

The 110 students who answered the Emig-King Attitudinal Scales before and after participating in the project showed an increase in several areas. There was an increase in the post-test answers of "always" and "often," and a decrease in "seldom" and "never," in three areas:

Use of writing as a way to express feelings

Willingness to share, and an enjoyment in sharing writings with family, friends and classmates

Enjoyment in writing

Overall, 103 students (94%) indicated a positive post markings, whereas only 7 students checked "seldom" or "never" for enjoyment. The initial goal of 80% was exceeded by a large margin.

### EDITING SKILLS

As a result of their participation in this writing project, the students' editing practice changed. The students became responsible for their own revisions through a self-evaluative process.

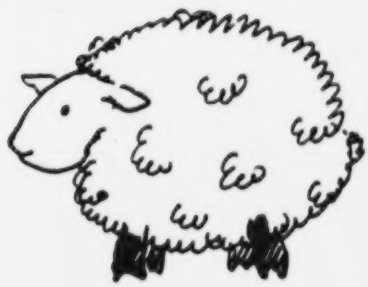
Before the project, the students used no specific self-editing procedure. It was necessary for the teacher to be the primary editor and either guide the students' editing closely or edit the writings comprehensively herself.

The introduction and implementation of the "Author's Self-Editing Checklist" resulted in the students becoming the primary editors and making the comprehensive revisions themselves. All of the students used some part of the checklist and 80-85% used all the checklist items.

### WRITING SKILLS

The student's achievement in the required eighth grade writing skills of Sentence Structure and Organization of Ideas was analyzed. Eighty-five (85) percent of the students achieved proficiency in sentence structure and 95% demonstrated proficiency in developing unified paragraphs.

The aforementioned student writing proficiencies were measured when the teacher read the final manuscripts and read all writing activities handed in by the students after the culmination of this project.



## INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

step-by-step pre-unit teacher/student activities

step-by-step lesson plans

a set of 6 teacher made dittos for students/teacher

1. student manuscript outline
2. letter to elementary school teachers
3. student self-editing check list
4. student peer-editing check list
5. pre-unit student attitudinal survey
6. post-unit student attitudinal survey

## MATERIALS YOU WILL NEED FOR BOOKS

8½ X 11 newspaper stock for dummy lay-out of books (approximately 10 pages per book)

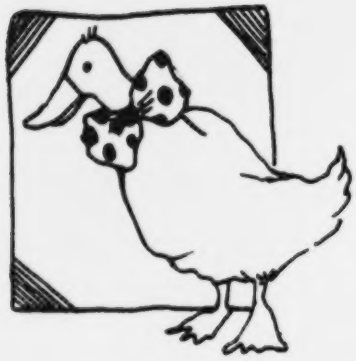
8½ X 11 white ditto paper for final manuscript

- pens
- crayons
- magic markers
- colored pencils
- rulers
- note-book paper
- staples

## OPTIONAL EMBELLISHMENT SUGGESTIONS

These add a "zingy" individual touch and can be easily glued or taped to final manuscript. Use your imagination!)

- sparkle dust
- stars
- a shiny new penny
- ribbons
- a flat balloon
- a bubble gum wrapper
- a photograph
- a postage stamp
- silver foil
- a lolli-pop



## MANUSCRIPT OUTLINE

AUTHOR'S NAME _____

WORKING TITLE _____

_____

1. PLOT SUMMARY: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. SETTING: _____

_____

_____

3. MAIN CHARACTERS: (names, ages, physical description, character traits)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. STATE ANY DIFFICULTIES YOU THINK YOU MIGHT ENCOUNTER: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

## LESSON PLAN TWO

**AIM** What are the various skills and techniques involved in creating and writing a children's book?

**MOTIVATION**

**SAY:** Let's share some of the writing techniques and story ideas that you've come up with and brought in today. First, what are some of the things that a writer must keep in mind when writing for children?

Elicit ideas.

**SAY:** Who else had that idea? Why do you think that technique or particular idea is especially important to keep in mind when writing for children? Discuss.

**PROCEDURE**

Teacher can hone ideas as they are elicited.

Elicit final wording from students.

Write suggestions on board.

Students will copy final list into note-books.

Final list should include:

- Vocabulary must be easy to understand

  Names must be easy to pronounce

- Plot must be easy to follow

- Storyline should be exciting or familiar

- Alliteration is extremely effective
- Repetition can be fun and used to make a point
- Characters: limit to one or two main characters
- Characters should be those a young child can identify with: clown, grandmother, baby, firefighter, sister, dentist
- Characters can have magical powers:

  a lolly-pop that can talk

  sneakers that can run by themselves

  a giraffe who is a surf board champ

- Story can teach a lesson, relate a real life experience, be pure fantasy, or any combination thereof
- Humor will always delight the young reader

**SAY:** What story ideas did you come up with?

Elicit.

Discuss.

If necessary, write several ideas on board as "food for thought."

**SUMMARY** Go over each technique on list that has been copied into notebook.

Discuss briefly why each is important.

**HOMEWORK** Give a manuscript outline to each student.

**SAY:** When thinking about the kind of book you want to write, ask yourself:

(Teacher may want to write questions on board)

- Do I want to write about real life or fantasy?
- Do I want to write about animals or people or both?
- Do I want my book to be funny or teach a lesson or both?
- Do I have any interests or hobbies that I want to use in my book?
- Do I have any real life experiences I want to write about?

**SAY:** Fill in your manuscript outlines and bring them in tomorrow.

Outline sheet included

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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JERRY, DOUG, AND NANCY.....for inspiring me to write children's books in the first place

LAURA NUMEROFF.....for her delightful and whimsical illustrations

...and to my father,

WILLIAM JOFFE NUMEROFF

for encouraging me every step of the way all of my life